



County of Los Angeles CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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DAVID E. JANSSEN
Chief Administrative Officer

January 18, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

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SANTA SUSANA FIELD LABORATORY GROUND WATER REMEDIATION - STATUS REPORT

On December 13, 2005, your Board instructed (1) the Chief Administrative Office to contact the United States Department of Energy, the State of California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board concerning the status of the ground water remediation program underway at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory; (2) the Department of Public Works and Department of Environmental Health to identify the status of their departments' ongoing monitoring of ground water contamination issues at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory; and (3) the Chief Administrative Officer, Department of Public Works, and Department of Environmental Health to report back to the Board of Supervisors within 30 days. This report encompasses all of the above instructions from your Board.

Background

The Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) is located in Ventura County at the top of Woolsey Canyon on approximately 2,850 acres of land. The eastern boundary of the site is in the proximity of the Ventura County - Los Angeles County border. The SSFL site drains into the San Fernando Valley watershed, as well as the Simi Valley watershed. The developed portion of the site is comprised of approximately 1,500 acres of land. In addition, there are 1,200 acres of undeveloped property and an additional 150 acres of undeveloped land that has been purchased to the north of the site.

The SSFL site is owned by Boeing and the National Aeronautical Space Agency (NASA). The United States Department of Energy (DOE) also owns several buildings at the site. Boeing has conducted operations at the SSFL for over five decades. Activities have included research, development, assembly, disassembly, and testing of rocket engines and chemical lasers. The DOE conducted research and development of energy related programs and seismic testing experiments. Current DOE activities at the site include facility closure and environmental remediation.

In 1997, the State Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) initiated and provided oversight to an investigation into contamination at the SSFL site. The investigation focused on suspected areas of contamination identified in the United States Environmental Protection Agency's SSFL Site Assessment. In 2000, the DTSC approved an investigation into the bedrock and deep ground water. A comprehensive investigation of shallow ground water was conducted at SSFL to identify and assess the flow, direction, and distribution of contaminants in shallow ground water away from contaminant source areas.

Responsibility and Oversight of County Departments

The Department of Health Services (Environmental Health) does not have any responsibility or authority to monitor ground water. Though the Department of Public Works has some responsibility regarding ground water supplies, the department does not monitor water quality in the ground water basin. The Upper Los Angeles River Area Watermaster and the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power have jurisdiction over the ground water and are thus responsible for monitoring the clean up efforts. The City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power owns the water rights in the San Fernando Valley watershed. At the present time, there are no production wells in the western part of the San Fernando Valley.

Regional, State, and Federal Oversight

The following State and Federal agencies have responsibilities associated with the remediation issues at the SSFL:

- The DTSC is the lead State agency for the project and the regulatory agency in charge of investigating the release and clean up of hazardous chemicals at the facility;
- The DOE is the regulatory agency in charge of clean up of radioactive contamination in Area 4 of the SSFL;

- The State Department of Health Services licenses the possession, use, transfer, and disposal of certain radioactive materials at SSFL; and
- The Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) oversees surface water discharges from the SSFL. The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit issued to the SSFL requires that discharges to surface waters are monitored and reported monthly.

Status of Activities at the SSFL Site

The DTSC indicated that a multi-phase approach to investigation, monitoring, and remediation planning and implementation is being utilized to address ground water issues. Activities include studying deep water flow characteristics, shear zones, faults, and contaminate migration. In addition, work continues on core sampling and implementing monitoring systems. Boeing is in the process of preparing reports for review and approval by the DTSC. Reports are being provided on a flow basis over the next several years. DTSC will perform a risk assessment and provide recommendations for the Corrective Measures Study. DTSC holds quarterly community meetings. The meetings generally include a panel of experts from DTSC, RWQCB, Ventura County Pollution Control District, and several local community groups. Public participation is encouraged at these meetings.

The DOE is pursuing an aggressive schedule to decommission facilities that were associated with the use of radiological materials at the SSFL. Boeing and the DOE have completed an assessment of the key locations. The evaluation identifies sites that may have contained regulated radioactive material and classifies the sites as radiologically impacted or non-impacted. Clean up activities are currently scheduled for completion in 2008. The DOE conducts periodic community meetings to provide local residents and interested persons an update of ongoing activities.

The Santa Susana Field Laboratory is permitted to discharge excess water from its ground water treatment system, industrial activities, on-site wastewater reclamation system, and rainfall runoff. The discharge of waste water to surface water is regulated under a NPDES permit issued to SSFL by the RWQCB. The NPDES permit limits and imposes requirements for waste water discharge and provides for the inspection and monitoring of waste water. The RWQCB reviews all data from inspection and monitoring activities and takes enforcement action when permit conditions have not been met. Special efforts have been taken to monitor the presence of perchlorate. If perchlorate pollution is present, data will be used to identify potential source(s), extent and degree of contamination and to develop an appropriate clean up strategy. Boeing's goal is to complete prescribed activities associated with deep ground water by 2008 and clean up of contaminated soils by the end of 2010. Other activities are scheduled for completion between 2008 and 2010.

Recent Developments

The RWQCB will consider two items related to the SSFL at its upcoming meeting scheduled for January 19, 2006 including revisions to the waste water discharge requirements and the issuance of a cease and desist order. The cease and desist order would require Boeing/SSFL to cease and desist discharges of contaminant concentrations in excess of applicable water quality standards. The meeting is scheduled to be held Thursday, January 19, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. at the City of Simi Valley Council Chambers located at 2929 Tapo Canyon Road in Simi Valley. In addition, the DTSC advised that the next SSFL working group community meeting will be held February 2, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. at the Simi Valley Cultural Center located at 3050 East Los Angeles Avenue in Simi Valley.

Recommendations

Based on discussions with the responsible State and Federal agencies, a review of relevant information associated with the remediation activities at the SSFL, and confirmation from the Departments of Health Services and Public Works regarding the lack of County authority or responsibility in this regard, there is no further action recommended by your Board at this time. The DTSC, DOE, and RWQCB are taking appropriate actions to remediate the surface and ground water, as well as other conditions at the site.

Should issues subsequently arise or referrals be made by the involved State and Federal agencies that require action by the County, the appropriate County department(s) with responsibility and authority will take action as needed. One potential project that may subsequently involve the County would be the potential development of land in the unincorporated area east of the SSFL site (West Chatsworth). As previously noted the Upper Los Angeles River Area Watermaster and the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power have jurisdiction over the ground water in this area and will continue to be responsible for monitoring the clean up efforts.

Residents interested in attending future SSFL working group community meetings should contact Nathan Shumaker of the DTSC Public Participation Group at (916) 225-3659. Participation in the working group is the most effective means for residents to be briefed on ongoing activities at the SSFL site, ask questions regarding the ongoing projects, and obtain contact information for all of the involved State and Federal agencies.

Each Supervisor
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If you have any questions, please contact me, or your staff may contact David Dijkstra of my staff at (213) 974-1163.

DEJ:DIL
SK:DD:kd

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Department of Health Services
Department of Public Works

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